

[REDACTED] 13 June STATINTL

MEMORANDUM

[REDACTED] 14 June

SUBJECT: Effects of Section 515 of the Foreign Assistance Legislation  
as Proposed by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

1. As presently constituted, Section 515 will require specific congressional authorization before funds from any U.S. Government agency could be used to finance any military operations by foreign forces in Laos, North Vietnam or Thailand outside the bounds of the country of the government or person receiving such funds.

2. Should specific authorization not be obtained--or even should issuance of such authorization be delayed in any budget-cycle year--this would mean that Thai irregulars could not be used in Laos. This would have an immediate impact on Laos, as an independent state, to serve as a buffer between Thailand and the North Vietnamese. Since 1970 Laos has had to rely on the assistance given to Lao and tribal forces by Thai irregulars to prevent the North Vietnamese from conquering Laos by military force, i.e., from achieving a position of military predominance sufficient to permit Hanoi to force the Royal Lao government to resign, capitulate or accede to Hanoi's dictates. The focal point of Laotian defense against North Vietnamese pressure--a defense made possible by Thai irregulars--has been the defense line in the mountainous area just north of the Laos capital of Vientiane. During the past two years

the Thai irregulars have provided the majority and the best of the defensive forces available to resist North Vietnamese attacks in north Laos.

3. Without this continued support by Thai irregulars, it is almost certain that the Laos will not be able to prevent virtual North Vietnamese control of their government and the remainder of their country. The result would be the free use of all of south Laos by the North Vietnamese to move men and supplies into South Vietnam and Cambodia. It would also place the North Vietnamese armies on the Thai border, greatly facilitating support to the Communist insurgents in Thailand. It would place the Thai government in direct confrontation with North Vietnamese military forces and undoubtedly result in the Thais calling upon the United States to come to their assistance under existing defense commitments by the United States.

4. Clearly this is a situation to be avoided if possible. The continued employment of Thai irregulars is important in maintaining Laos as a buffer between Thailand and North Vietnam at minimum expense to the United States and without United States involvement. The use of Thai irregulars also avoids direct confrontation between North Vietnamese and Regular Thai Army forces. The present method of U.S. support to Thai irregulars in Laos should continue in order to ensure the continued availability of Thai irregulars for immediate commitment to meet North Vietnamese attacks in Laos where and as they occur.

Finally, the presence of the Thai irregular volunteers in northern Laos plays a vital role in tying down the equivalent of a North Vietnamese main force division. These North Vietnamese troops would otherwise be available for operations against South Vietnam, with resulting effect on the rate of withdrawal of U.S. personnel.

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TO: Mr. Edward Braswell  
Chief Counsel  
Senate Armed Services Committee

Ed:

Here is some material to be used in arguments to delete new Section 515 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (which would have the effect of cutting off funds to the Thai irregulars). We have no objection to these arguments being used in open session if you and the Chairman feel they would be effective.

John M. Maury  
Legislative Counsel

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